

Notes on the Herpetological Collections in the Selangor Museum

By N. SMEDLEY, M.A.

(with two text-figures)

In conjunction with a previous paper (Bull. Raffles Mus., 5, 1931, pp. 49-54) which dealt with the collections in the Raffles Museum, Singapore, these notes are intended to bring our knowledge of the Peninsular fauna up to date. They are based mainly on an examination of the collections in the Selangor Museum, but specimens forwarded through that institution and in some cases transferred to the Raffles Museum are included; in this connection thanks are due to Mr. H. M. Pendlebury, Curator, Selangor Museum. A recent paper on the amphibians and reptiles of the Cameron Highlands (Bull. Raffles Mus., 6, 1931, pp. 105-123) should also be consulted.

I have dispensed with a synonymy, as these notes are supplementary to the work already done by Boulenger (Fauna Malay Peninsula, 1912) and Smith (Bull. Raffles Mus., 3, 1930), where all the necessary references will be found.

I had hoped that locality records might have some bearing on the problem of discontinuous distribution, but the only conclusion to be drawn appears to be that more systematic collecting has been carried out in the north of the Peninsula than in the south, except near settlements and special localities such as hills, and many species may yet be collected from localities hitherto unrecorded. I do not consider remarkable the fact that the sea-snakes show a break in continuity (cf. Smith, Bull. Raffles Mus., 3, p. iv). Although not affected by geographical barriers they must be influenced, like all marine organisms, by physical conditions. However, in some cases, notably that of *Thalassophis* and *Thalassophina*, the discontinuity is more apparent than real; in dealing with marine forms the area over which collecting is carried out is usually a very small percentage of the whole, and strictly local conditions such as the presence or absence of coral, of river-mouths, of aggregations of plankton and therefore of small food-fishes must all be taken into account. Similarly, the land forms are not dependent only on geographical boundaries, and a species originally occupying the Peninsula might well have found a more suitable environment both north and south of its original home. A change in biotic environment frequently causes a species to migrate, not necessarily in one direction only.

I. DOUBTFUL RECORDS.

When compiling his supplement to Boulenger's Reptilia and Batrachia from the Malay Peninsula (Bull. Raffles Mus., 3, 1930), Dr. Malcolm Smith deleted from Boulenger's earlier list several species whose presence was recorded on unreliable grounds, many of them from the collections of Cantor. He retained other records which seemed to me to have no better claim to authenticity; I have examined the position with regard to these species and the list which follows gives the names of those which should, in my opinion, be deleted as their presence in the faunal list is misleading. Where specimens are available for examination in the Selangor Museum, I find that they are either definitely from areas outside the Peninsula or have no indication of the locality whence they were derived.

Several factors make it advisable to examine these old records with great care, chief of which are the fact that the specimens, particularly those of Cantor, were often purchased from dealers in Penang or Singapore, and also that many collections

were made by medical officers and others who were frequently moved from place to place, carrying with them such specimens as they had obtained. There is no doubt that confusion in labelling frequently resulted.

In some cases a species thus doubtfully recorded has since been found, but even so the original record is not necessarily confirmed (e.g. *Elaphe porphyracea* recorded from Singapore but actually known only from a montane habitat). For practical purposes such as the consideration of distribution it is obviously better to strike out all doubtful records.

The following species probably do not occur in the Peninsula:—

Hemidactylus depressus Gray.

The British Museum specimen "said to be from Singapore" was probably not actually collected there.

Hemidactylus leschenaultii D. & B.

Obtained by Cantor in Penang. Probably not a local specimen.

Hemidactylus flaviviridis Rupp.

Cantor: Penang.

Varanus flavescens (Gray).

Boulenger's record is based on a specimen of *V. dumerilii*.

Lygosoma albopunctatum (Gray).

Cantor: Penang.

Typhlops bothriorhynchus Gunth.

Cantor: Penang.

Typhlops mutilatus Werner.

The types are said to be from "Malacca",¹ and are subject to the same doubt as Cantor's specimens.

Cylindrophis lineatus Blanford.

The type was until recently in the Raffles Museum collection. It was collected by Dr. Dennys and the locality given, Singapore, is therefore very doubtful; the specimen probably came originally from Borneo, where it has since

¹ A term often employed by continental zoologists to denote the Malay Peninsula.

been found. This fact is mentioned by Boulenger, but both he and Smith retain it in the Peninsular list; I consider that it should be deleted.

Oligodon cruentatus (Gthr.).

Stoliczka: Province Wellesley or Penang.

Colemanella sumatrana Edeling.

The only known specimen from Singapore was probably imported from Sumatra, if correctly identified.

II. NOTES ON THE COLLECTIONS

Trionyx cartilagineus (Bodd.).

According to Mr. G. B. Purvis, Government Veterinary Surgeon, Raub, Pahang, this turtle has been found feeding on crabs.

Pelochelys bibroni (Owen).

Dr. Smith states that he has not seen any specimens of this turtle of definitely marine provenance, and has since enquired in correspondence if I had any evidence of a marine habitat in the species. At the time I could obtain none, but have since seen a cast in the Selangor Museum taken from a specimen caught at sea, according to Mr. E. Seimund of that Museum.

It was taken off the Jeram coast on "rawai" (a line of unbaited hooks) set for rays by Chinese fishermen in the channel between Pulau Angsa and Jeram. Mr. E. Seimund was present at the capture.

The beast is known to the Malays as "labi-labi hidong pendek." "Labi-labi" is a generic name for all the soft-shelled turtles; the Malay name may be translated as "the short-nosed soft-shelled turtle."

Aeluroscalabotes felinus (Gthr.).

A gravid female of this rare lizard was taken on Wray's Hill, Perak, at 1,000' on 26th Mar., 1932, by Mr. J. E. Kempe. It was found lying in the base of a dead palm frond. Snout-vent, 100 mm. tail 70 mm. The eggs were 22 mm. by 12 mm.

Brownish above, with lighter, greyish, dark-edged, rather obscure ocelli, the anterior of which were tinged with pink; sides of snout blackish, lips and throat white; underside of body whitish flushed with pink near fore and hind limbs, belly greenish with dark markings. Tail, above brown with black-edged

transversely elongate white ocelli also found on under side which is red. A black-edged pinkish area round anus.

The lizard appeared moribund when taken and was tightly coiled; this is probably related to the fact that it was moulting preparatory to deposition of the eggs.

This curious gecko is but rarely seen. A cockroach (determined by Mr. H. M. Pendlebury as *Rhienoda rugosa* Brunn.) was found attached to the underside of the lizard between the forelimbs. When removed it was found that the gecko had seized it; this is in accordance with the known insectivorous habit of the lizard.

Peropus larutensis (Blgr.).

Mr. H. M. Pendlebury obtained a female specimen of this rare lizard on Bukit Kutu, Selangor, 3,400', on 12th Mar., 1931.

The symphyseal is not truncate and is larger than the median chin-shields. In a specimen from Gunong Kledang, Perak, in the Raffles Museum collection the symphyseal is not truncate but is slightly smaller than the median chin-shields.

As Mr. Pendlebury's specimen is of such recent date I am able to supply details of the coloration.

Head and back mottled brownish grey (fawn-pink in life. H.M.P.), tail lighter with irregular dark transverse bands. A dark line from snout to shoulder through eye. Underneath whitish, the dark colour of the dorsal surface extending well on to the ventral surface laterally; throat and chin dark spotted. Underside of tail orange-red, brown at tip. Snout to vent, 34 mm.; tail, 34 mm. "Found in rotten stump of tree."

Cosymbotus platyurus (Schneid.).

The specimens referred to as *Mimetozone craspedotus* from Koh Samui, Gulf of Siam, by Robinson and Kloss (Journ. F.M.S. Mus., V, 1915, p. 153) and by Smith (Bull. Raffles Mus., 3, p. 19) are not that species, but *C. platyurus*.

Calotes emma Gray.

Two specimens from Pulau Rumbia, Straits of Malacca, are of exceptional size, as is frequently the case with island dwellers; the snout-vent lengths are 105 mm. and 100 mm., the tail in each case being 285 mm. There is a specimen in the Raffles Museum, from Taiping, nearly approaching 100 mm. in length of head and body, but examination of a long series shows this to be exceptional on the mainland.

Natrix conspicillata (Gthr.).

Tropidonotus conspicillatus Gunther, P. Z. S., 1872, p. 596; Boulenger, Cat. Sn. I, 1893, p. 222; Boden Kloss, Journ. F. M. S. Mus., VI, 1915, p. 41; de Rooij, Rept. Indo-Austr. Arch. II, 1917, p. 83; Smith, Bull. Raffles Mus., 3, 1930, p. 43.

The record of the presence of this snake in the Peninsula was based on a single specimen obtained at Ginting Simpah, Selangor-Pahang Boundary, 2,000', on 2nd Nov., 1913.



Fig. 1.—*Natrix conspicillata* (Gunther).

Left maxillary of Ginting Simpah specimen. Greatly enlarged.

A dissection of the maxilla of this specimen (figure 1) shows that the posterior teeth are abruptly enlarged, whereas Boulenger and later Kloss, de Rooij and Smith place it in that section of the genus in which the maxillary teeth are gradually enlarged¹. As I read Gunther's original description *N. conspicillata* has the posterior teeth abruptly enlarged and Boulenger's key, followed by later authors, is inaccurate in this respect. I have also dissected specimens from Kaung, British North Borneo and Chikus Forest Reserve, Perak, 1925, (G. H. Sworder), both agreeing with the Ginting Simpah specimen. The Perak specimen is the second example of this species to be taken in the Malay Peninsula. In the description of the snake from Ginting Simpah the temporal count should read "1+2" and not "2+1" (Kloss, 1915).

The label bears a note on the colour in life:—"Under-surface and labial markings deep pink (not yellow) H.C.R. & C.B.K." *N. conspicillata* may be included in Smith's key (1930, p. 42) after *N. nigrocincta* in Section II, sub-section A. The sub-caudal count for the sub-section will read "40-93."

Natrix chrysarga (Schleg.).

An exceptionally large specimen was taken by Mr. H. M. Pendlebury in the Larut Hills, Perak, 4,300', on 14th Feb., 1932. Total length, 735 mm.; tail, 185 mm. Ventrals, 159; sub-caudals,

¹ Dr. Smith (*in litt.*) says that this snake is "on the borderline" and may fall into either division, the teeth varying considerably. I cannot find any previous record in print calling attention to this variability and trust the above will help to demonstrate the need for detailed examination where a possible generic or sub-generic character is involved.

74. Four post-oculars on left side (usually three). This specimen, a gravid female, is very dark in colour. A still larger specimen was taken by Messrs. H. M. Pendlebury and F. N. Chasen at Kiau, (3,000') Mt. Kinabalu, British North Borneo, in April, 1929. This was also a gravid female with a total length of 765 mm.; tail, 178 mm. Another example from the same locality was taken in the act of swallowing a frog, *Rhacophorus leucomystax*. Boulenger (Fauna Mal. Pen., 1912) notes that it feeds on frog-spawn.

Pseudoxenodon macrops (Blyth).

Smedley, Bull. Raffles Mus., 5, p. 51.

I have examined (*l.c.s.*) a specimen from Perak which was referred by Dr. Boulenger (*in litt.*) to this species, and later determined by Dr. Smith as *Natrix chrysarga*. It is in very poor condition but is, in my opinion, an example of *P. macrops*. The scales at mid-body are in seventeen rows, and the general habit is much heavier than in *Natrix*.

Calamaria albiventer (Gray).

A specimen taken by Mr. H. M. Pendlebury in the Larut Hills, Perak, 4,300', in February, 1932, confirms the presence of this rare snake in the Peninsula. Total length, 205 mm.; tail, 18 mm. Ventrals, 154; sub-caudals, 21.

Previously recorded only from Penang and Province Wellesley.

Enhydryis enhydryis (Schneid.).

A specimen was taken by Mr. H. T. Pagden at Parit Buntar, Perak. "In drain, 10-30 p.m., 31-10-31." Total length, 380 mm.; tail, 85 mm. Ventrals, 163; sub-caudals, 68 (first three undivided). Boulenger's maximum sub-caudal count of 48 (Fauna Mal. Pen., 1912, p. 160) is a misprint for 78. A Raffles Museum specimen from Bangkok has 79 sub-caudals.

Boiga drapiezii (Boie).

I recently (Bull. Raffles Mus., 5, 1931, p. 48) recorded an exceptionally large example of this species from the Natuna Islands. The Selangor Museum possesses a somewhat smaller specimen from Lower Perak, 1800 mm. in length, which is considerably larger than any previously noted with the exception of the above.

Passerita fasciolata (Fischer).

Tragops fasciolatus Fischer, Arch. f. Nat., 1885, p. 66, pl. V, fig. 4.
Dryophis fasciolatus, v. Lidth de Jeude, Notes Leyd. Mus., XII,
 1890, p. 23; Boulenger, Cat. Sn. III, 1896, p. 182; de Rooij,
 Rept. Indo-Austr. Arch., II, 1917, p. 207.

A specimen which I refer to this species was taken at
 Ginting Bidai, Selangor, 2,000', April, 1917 (C.B.K.). Ventrals,
 238; sub-caudals, 187. Anal entire.

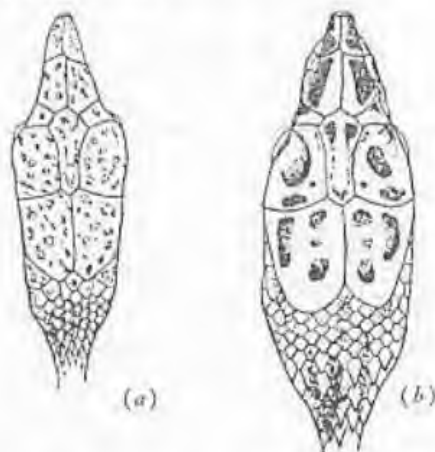


Fig. 2.—*Passerita fasciolata* (Fischer)

(a) From the Malay Peninsula. $\times 2$.

(b) From Borneo. $\times 2$.

Colours (in spirit): brownish grey above, with dark cross-bands anteriorly; below lighter, each ventral keel with a dark blotch leaving lighter median and lateral stripes. Head with small brown spots (fig. 2a) much smaller than those on the head of a specimen from Borneo (fig. 2b). A fine dark line through the eye separating the darker head from the lighter cheeks.

This is the first record of the species from the Malay Peninsula. Hitherto known from Sumatra, Borneo and the Natuna Islands.

There is also in the Selangor Museum a second specimen labelled "Larut Hills or Penang" taken in 1911. It is in poor condition and faded.

[In the Raffles Museum I find three examples which must be referred to *P. fasciolata*. One of these from the Rhio Archipelago has been recorded as strongly resembling *P. fasciolata* in

A SUNFISH (MOLA LANCEOLATA) FROM MALAYSIAN WATERS

a previous note (Chasen & Smedley, Journ. Mal. Br. Roy. Asiat. Soc., V, 1927, p. 354, *Dryophis prasinus*). Of the other two one is from Bukit Timah, Singapore (G.H.S., 15-3-23) and the other from the Botanic Gardens, Singapore].

The nuchal scales are slightly enlarged in the Peninsular specimens, but scarcely, if at all, in the Bornean example. (Fig. 2b).
